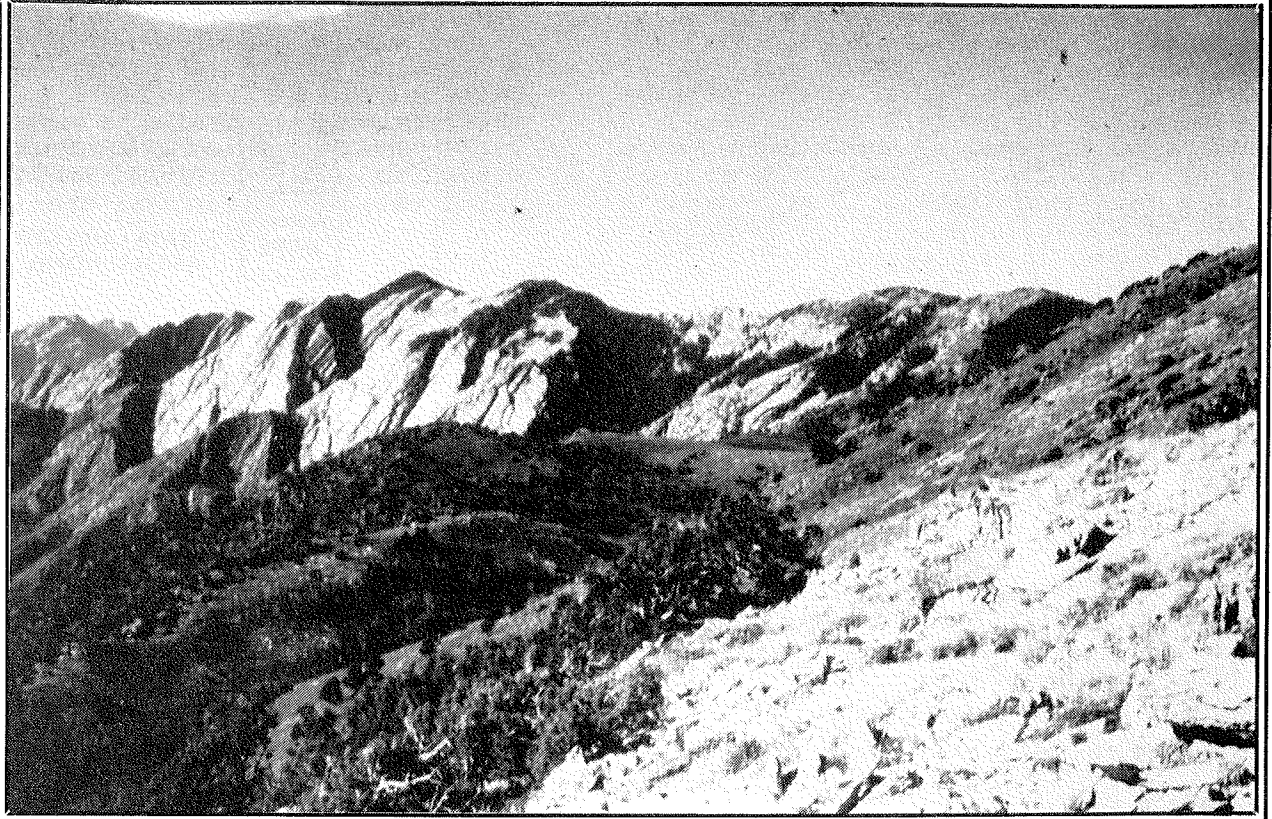
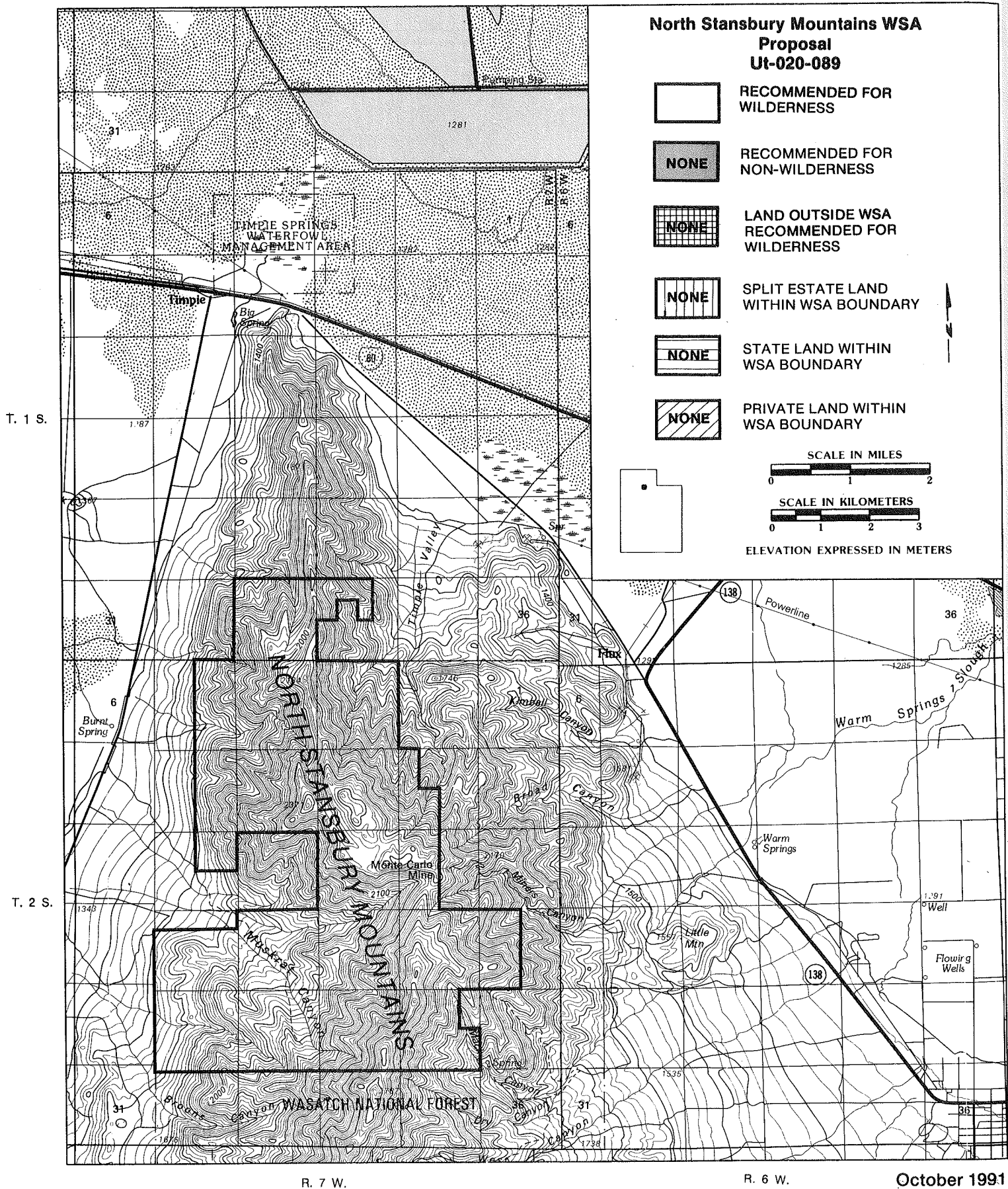



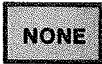




# North Stansbury Mountains WSA



# NORTH STANSBURY MOUNTAINS WSA



## North Stansbury Mountains WSA Proposal Ut-020-089

-  RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS
-  NONE RECOMMENDED FOR NON-WILDERNESS
-  NONE LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS
-  NONE SPLIT ESTATE LAND WITHIN WSA BOUNDARY
-  NONE STATE LAND WITHIN WSA BOUNDARY
-  NONE PRIVATE LAND WITHIN WSA BOUNDARY

SCALE IN MILES  
0 1 2

SCALE IN KILOMETERS  
0 1 2 3

ELEVATION EXPRESSED IN METERS

R. 7 W.

R. 6 W.

October 1991

# NORTH STANSBURY MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

## 1. THE STUDY AREA: 10,480 acres

The North Stansbury Mountains Wilderness Study Area (WSA) (UT-020-089) is in northeastern Tooele County, 40 miles west of Salt Lake City, Utah (population 163,697). The study area is a more or less triangular unit about 6 miles long from north to south and 3 miles from east to west. The Grantsville Unit of the Wasatch National Forest borders the WSA on the south (see Map). Interstate Highway 80 is 3 miles north of the WSA. Boundaries of the WSA are along section and subsection lines that differentiate property ownership, exclude existing developments, and enclose the more rugged portions of the northern end of the Stansbury Mountains. The WSA includes 10,480 acres of public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). There are no private, State, or split-estate lands within the WSA (see Table 1).

Two parcels of State land and four parcels of private land are adjacent to the WSA on the east and west.

The WSA is a north-south ridge with steep, V-shaped canyons, that drops from 8,800 feet elevation at the crest of the WSA in the south to 5,200 feet along the northern base. Vegetation is predominantly juniper and conifer forests, but growth zones at different elevations provide a distinct ecological character.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and is included in the Utah BLM Statewide Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) finalized in November 1990. Three alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: an all wilderness alternative, which is the recommendation in this report; a partial wilderness alternative of 8,700 acres; and a no wilderness (no action) alternative.

**TABLE 1**  
**LAND STATUS AND ACREAGE SUMMARY IN THE STUDY AREA**

WITHIN THE WSA	ACRES
BLM (surface and subsurface)	10,480
Split-Estate (BLM surface only)	0
In-holdings (State, Private)	0
Total	10,480
<b>WITHIN THE RECOMMENDED WILDERNESS BOUNDARY</b>	
BLM (within the WSA)	10,480
BLM (outside the WSA)	0
Split-Estate (within the WSA)	0
Split-Estate (outside the WSA)	0
Total BLM land recommended for wilderness	10,480
In-holdings (State, private)	0
<b>WITHIN THE AREA NOT RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS</b>	
BLM	0
Split-Estate	0
Total BLM land not recommended for wilderness	0
In-holdings (State, Private)	0

Source: BLM File Data

## NORTH STANSBURY MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

### 2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE:

10,480 acres

(recommended for wilderness)

0 acres

(recommended for nonwilderness)

The recommendation for this WSA is to designate the entire area as wilderness. This is the environmentally preferable alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term.

Slightly more than 98 percent of the proposed wilderness area is natural and about 55 percent has opportunities for outstanding solitude and primitive recreation. Most of the area is too rugged for off-highway vehicular (OHV) recreation. The WSA is scenic: the rocky cliffs and dark evergreens are an "island" that contrasts sharply with the surrounding desert. From several points along the crest there are unobstructed views of the Great Salt Lake and the Great Salt Lake Desert.

The combination of vegetation zones in the WSA is found in only three other WSAs in Utah, and two of these areas include other vegetation types. Designation would add to and complement the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) in the Great Basin in Utah and Nevada. The particular combination of potential vegetation types that could develop in the WSA are not likely to occur in any established wilderness area or any other BLM study area except the King Top WSA, also in Utah but not recommended for wilderness.

Wilderness designation would be consistent with decisions for the adjacent U.S. Forest Service (FS) lands, which are intended to preserve natural environmental values along the crest of the mountain range by designating and managing those lands as roadless semi-primitive, excluding vehicular use.

Conflicts with other uses are not likely. Potential for development of leasable minerals is generally low within the WSA. Wilderness designation would conflict with potential for mining of lead, silver, and gold in T. 2 S., R. 7 W., Secs. 3 and 11.

However, these minerals could be mined following designation if valid claims have been filed as of the date of designation.

Grazing use could continue as it is now, with only minor inconvenience caused by closure of a total of 2 miles of ways.

Military overflights occur, but they would create only temporary intrusions on the outstanding opportunities for solitude in the WSA.

### 3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATION

#### Wilderness Characteristics

##### A. Naturalness

Naturalness is defined as an attribute in which the evidence of man is substantially unnoticeable to the average visitor and where minor imprints of man exhibit no cumulative impact that is substantially noticeable. About 98 percent of the WSA is in an essentially natural condition. Evidence of man is not apparent within the unit, and the entire WSA meets the Wilderness Act criteria for naturalness. The difficulty of access into the WSA has helped preserve its primeval character. The WSA generally appears as an untouched rugged mountain ridge with rugged cliffs and dark evergreens.

The only intrusions are a mining road, adit, shaft, and 2 miles of ways in the lower portions of Burnt and Muskrat Canyons on the west side of the WSA. These intrusions are substantially unnoticeable. About 200 acres do not meet the Wilderness Act criteria.

##### B. Solitude

Visitors can find solitude in about 55 percent of the WSA (5,810 acres). Both topographic and vegetation screening exist in scattered locations. The north-south trending ridge that forms the WSA is flanked by steep slopes separated by rugged canyons that provide screening from others. Conifers on the north sides of the canyons and mixed conifers and riparian woodlands in the bottoms of the canyons provide a feeling of isolation and seclusion. Outstanding opportunities for solitude exist in the forested, rocky chutes leading into Muskrat Canyon on the slopes west of Onaqui Peak; in the canyons south of Timpie Valley and in Mack Canyon; and in places along the ridgeline where aspen, mountain mahogany, and Douglas fir provide screening.

Areas comprising about 4,670 acres (45 percent of the WSA) are conspicuously open and are not screened by vegetation or terrain. Recreationists in these areas would have little sense of seclusion if other visitors were nearby.

## NORTH STANSBURY MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

The WSA is within the South Range of the U.S. Air Force (USAF) Utah Test and Training Range (UTTR), one of the busiest military air spaces in the country. At least 100 to 150 flights occur daily within the UTTR, 6 days a week, including some as low as 100 feet above the ground. Most overflights in the vicinity of the Stansbury Mountains are subsonic and usually are not directly over the WSA. The overflights cause sight and sound intrusions that detract from but do not eliminate overall opportunities for solitude.

### C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

About 55 percent of the WSA meets the requirements for primitive recreation set by the Wilderness Act, and recreational experiences are potentially outstanding. Most current annual recreational use of about 300 visitor days is hunting and hiking along the ridgeline to the crest, at 8,800 feet, but there are significant opportunities for backpacking, horseback riding, and sightseeing.

An adventure awaits backpackers who walk the 30-mile Stansbury Range, from Timpie Ridge on the north to Johnson's Pass on the south, through the WSA and the Wasatch-Cache National Forest Desert Peak Wilderness. No trail follows the entire crest of the range. Access to the WSA is limited by adjacent private lands, but can be obtained from Muskrat Canyon on the west and FS lands on the south. Between the WSA on the north and the Desert Peak Wilderness are 3,500 acres of National Forest lands that are currently being managed as a semi-primitive nonmotorized area.

Horseback riding is possible in the central portion of the range. Riders might have some difficulty in the north along Timpie Ridge and in the south above Mack Canyon, but subalpine meadows in the north and on the south ridge above Miners Canyon are relatively gentle slopes. Miners and Muskrat Canyons provide easy travel by horseback.

The crest of the WSA provides fine panoramas. Scenic vistas on all sides include the Great Salt Lake to the north.

### D. Special Features

Cougars inhabit the Stansbury Mountains. The bald eagle, an endangered species, and the golden eagle, a threatened species, inhabit the area and the peregrine falcon, also an endangered species, may be a resident.

Candidate threatened or endangered species that may live in the WSA are the ferruginous hawk, Swainson's hawk, long-billed curlew, western snowy plover, white-faced ibis, western yellow-billed cuckoo, spotted bat, and Stansbury pocket gopher. The bird species also frequent other areas throughout the Great Basin and other parts of the western United States. Refer to Appendix 4 and the Affected Environment, Vegetation and Wildlife Including Special Status Species sections of the Utah BLM Statewide Wilderness EIS for additional information.

### Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

#### A. Expanding the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems

Wilderness designation of this WSA would add a combination of potential natural vegetation (PNV) ecosystems not presently represented in Utah or in the NWPS. PNV is the vegetative type that would eventually become climax vegetation if not altered by human interference, and is not necessarily the vegetation that is currently present in an area.

The WSA is in the Intermountain Sagebrush Province/Ecoregion. The PNV is juniper-pinyon woodland (9,780 acres) and spruce-fir-Douglas fir (700 acres). This particular combination of PNV would probably occur elsewhere only in the King Top WSA (UT-050-070) and is not represented in the NWPS. This information is summarized in Table 2 from BLM data compiled in December 1989.

#### B. Assessing the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation within a Days Driving Time (5 Hours) of Major Population Centers

The WSA is within a 5-hour drive of the Salt Lake City-Ogden, Utah and Provo-Orem, Utah standard metropolitan statistical areas. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a 5-hour drive of these population centers.

#### C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas

The North Stansbury Mountains WSA would not contribute significantly to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the NWPS. As of January 1987, the NWPS included 23 designated wilderness areas comprising 4,868,316 acres in Utah

# NORTH STANSBURY MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

**TABLE 2**  
**ECOSYSTEM REPRESENTATION**

BAILEY-KUCHLER CLASSIFICATION (PNV)	NWPS AREAS		OTHER BLM STUDIES	
	AREAS	ACRES	AREAS	ACRES
NATIONWIDE (INTERMOUNTAIN SAGEBRUSH PROVINCE)				
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	6	93,656	75	2,153,907
Spruce-Fir-Douglas Fir Forest	0	0	1	50,862
UTAH (INTERMOUNTAIN SAGEBRUSH PROVINCE)				
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	2	14,955	13	249,653
Spruce-Fir-Douglas Fir Forest	0	0	1	50,862

Source: BLM File Data.

**TABLE 3**  
**WILDERNESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS OF MAJOR POPULATION CENTERS**

POPULATION CENTERS	NWPS AREAS		OTHER BLM STUDIES	
	AREAS	ACRES	AREAS	ACRES
Salt Lake City-Ogden, Utah	11	1,099,962	78	2,249,195
Provo-Orem, Utah	11	721,793	80	2,776,388

Source: BLM File Data.

and the nearest adjacent states, Idaho and Nevada.

Nine designated wilderness areas are within 100 miles of the WSA. All are in National Forests. In a clockwise direction, beginning to the north, are the 23,850-acre Wellsville Mountain Wilderness, the 44,350-acre Mt. Naomi Wilderness, the 16,000-acre Mt. Olympus Wilderness, the 456,705-acre High Uintas Wilderness, the 11,334-acre Twin Peaks Wilderness, the 30,088-acre Lone Peak Wilderness, the 10,750-acre Mt. Timpanogos Wilderness, the 28,000-acre Mt. Nebo Wilderness, and; just south of the WSA; the 25,500-acre Desert Peak Wilderness.

In Utah and the adjacent states nearest the WSA (Nevada and Idaho), there are 23 wilderness areas that comprise 4,868,316 acres, but in the Great Basin there are only six wilderness areas totaling 272,994 acres. The WSA would add a PNV combination which is not represented at all in the NWPS.

Manageability (The area must be capable of being effectively managed to preserve its wilderness character.)

Overall, the WSA could be managed as wilderness. Because there are no State or private lands in the WSA, access and exchange or purchase would not have to be considered. Any activities or development on two sections of adjacent State land west and east of the WSA and on three parcels of private land to the east could reduce the quality of solitude in adjoining parts of the WSA but would not significantly affect wilderness qualities overall.

Five pre-FLPMA mining claims (100 acres) are in the WSA. Any mineral-related activity that might occur would have to be conducted under the unnecessary and undue degradation guidelines of the 43 CFR 3809 regulations, including reclamation of disturbance. Temporary roads and use of motorized equipment would have to be allowed if there are no reasonable alternatives. Only 2 acres of surface disturbance are projected in the



## NORTH STANSBURY MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

WSA in the foreseeable future if it is designated as wilderness. There would be temporary reductions in the quality of opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation on about 14 percent (1,500 acres) of the WSA. However, mining and mineral exploration would be restricted to mining claims valid at the time of wilderness designation.

No plans are known for any kind of non-mineral-related activity in the WSA. Any proposals for use of the area if designated as wilderness, however, would be subject to wilderness management regulations, including closure to OHV use and restrictions to meet visual resource management objectives. Wilderness management could not allow rangeland developments that might disturb wilderness values, but continued livestock grazing would be consistent with wilderness management guidelines.

The USAF has stated that military flights will continue in the vicinity of the WSA, whether or not it is designated. Overflights would detract from solitude, and management could not mitigate such disturbance. This conflict could be resolved only on a congressional level.

### Energy and Mineral Resource Values

The WSA could contain deposits of lead, silver, zinc, and copper that are currently listed as strategic and critical material.

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the U.S. Bureau of Mines (USBM) prepared a mineral assessment report for the North Stansbury Mountains WSA (USGS Bulletin 1745-B, Michael P. Foose, et al., 1989). The report indicates that the likelihood of oil and gas resources in the WSA is low with little certainty that these resources do or do not exist. It is possible, however, that some hydrocarbons may have accumulated in some of the younger rocks along the western edge of the study area. The potential for undiscovered geothermal resources is moderate in a small area in the southwestern portion of the WSA. The eastern and southern parts of the WSA are considered to have moderate mineral potential for undiscovered lead, zinc, silver, gold, and mercury. The remaining portions of the study area are assigned a low mineral resource potential for these metals. A small area in the southeasternmost part of the study area has inferred subeconomic resources of limestone suitable for making cement. Inferred subeconomic resources of sand and

gravel exist within Muskrat Canyon. These inferred subeconomic resources are not likely to be developed.

### Impacts on Resources

The comparative impact table (Table 4) summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for alternatives considered including designation or nondesignation of the area as wilderness.

### Local Social and Economic Considerations

Social and economic factors were not considered to be significant issues in the EIS.

### Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Comments received during the early stages of the EIS preparation were used to develop significant study issues and alternatives for the ultimate management of the WSA.

During formal public review of the Draft EIS, a total of 56 inputs specifically addressing this WSA were received from 60 commenters, including oral statements received at 17 public hearings on the EIS. Each letter or oral testimony was considered to be one input. Duplicate letters or oral statements by the same commenter were not counted as additional inputs or signatures. Each individual was credited with one signature or testimony regardless of the number of inputs.

In general, 41 commenters supported wilderness designation for part or all of the WSA, while 13 were opposed. Six commenters addressed the relative merits of the EIS, but took no formal position on wilderness designation.

Those favoring wilderness commented on special features and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. The majority of those commenting in favor of wilderness were from urban Utah. Of particular concern was the need to protect wildlife and wildlife habitat.

Those opposing wilderness were concerned that wilderness designation would preclude mineral exploration and development and that the WSA lacks wilderness qualities. The majority of those opposing wilderness designation were local residents and people with mining interests.

## NORTH STANSBURY MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

Three Federal agencies, the FS, USAF, and USBM, commented on the Draft EIS. The FS favored a partial wilderness designation for the WSA as part of a larger wilderness area which would include the Desert Peak Wilderness Area and additional forest lands between the Wilderness and the North Stansbury Mountains WSA. The other Federal agencies did not take a position regarding designation or nondesignation of the WSA. The USAF noted that low altitude flights will continue over the WSA with or without wilderness designation and that they will not negotiate nor sign any agreement to avoid the proposed wilderness area. This conflict can be resolved only on the Congressional level.

The USBM noted that the BLM's Final EIS should include the findings of the USGS and USBM minerals investigations and projected that those findings would be available in November 1988. Those findings were incorporated into the Final EIS and study report.

No comment letters were received on the Final EIS.

There are no State lands in-held in the WSA. In commenting on the Draft EIS the State of Utah expressed general opposition to wilderness designation but did not take a definite position regarding wilderness designation of the WSA.

Specific comments by the State addressed vegetation, minerals, wildlife, and livestock. The State of Utah noted that the WSA has moderate wilderness values and conflicts and that the partial wilderness alternative would retain the highest quality wilderness values while minimizing problems.

The Tooele County Master Plan, prepared by Mountain Area Planners in 1972 is not specifically directed to the North Stansbury Mountains WSA. However, the Tooele County Commission is opposed to wilderness designation for BLM lands in Utah, including the WSA. According to the Commission, wilderness designation would be in direct conflict with the Tooele County Master Plan and current zoning designations which were developed and adopted many years before any wilderness proposals were considered. Specific comments from the Commission on the Draft EIS dealt with the intrusions in the WSA and concluded that the WSA does not have real wilderness values.



# NORTH STANSBURY WSA

Table 4  
Comparative Summary of Impacts by Alternative

Issue Topic	Alternatives		
	Proposed Action All Wilderness (10,480 Acres)	No Action/No Wilderness	Partial Wilderness (8,700 Acres)
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Wilderness values would be preserved overall throughout the WSA. In the foreseeable future, naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be directly lost on 1 acre and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be indirectly reduced in quality on 1,500 acres due to mineral exploration. Special features would be preserved.	Wilderness values would not be protected by wilderness designation and loss would occur as intrusions increase. In the foreseeable future, naturalness and opportunities for primitive recreation would be directly lost on 2 acres and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be indirectly reduced in quality on 1,500 to 3,000 acres due to mineral exploration. Continued vehicular use of 2 miles of ways would detract from opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. Special features would not be significantly affected.	Wilderness values would be preserved in the designated area which is about 83 percent of the WSA. In the foreseeable future, naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be directly lost on 2 acres and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be indirectly reduced in quality on 1,500 to 3,000 acres due to mineral exploration. Special features would be preserved. Continued vehicular use of 0.25 mile of way would detract from opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation.
Impacts on Mineral and Energy Exploration and Production	Wilderness designation would eliminate or severely constrain exploration and potential production for locatable minerals. Loss of development opportunities would not be significant.	Mineral and energy exploration or development would not be adversely affected. The WSA would be open to exploration and development of mineral and energy resources.	This alternative would not adversely affect mineral and energy exploration and development.
Impacts on Livestock Management	Vehicular restrictions on 2 miles of way could inconvenience six livestock operators in the area. Losses of livestock due to predators would increase slightly. The overall effect on methods and costs of livestock management would be negligible.	Livestock grazing would not be affected.	Effects would be approximately the same as with the All Wilderness Alternative.